

199X

The Official Newsletter of the
Greater Chicago MegaZone



...Features...

Nan Ni?	6
Fiction: Have Attitude; Will Travel.....	12
Starship Troopers: Part I	18

...Departments...

The Editor Is Stupid	3
Anime News	4
Bulletin Board	9
Club News	10

199X

*The Official Newsletter
of the
Greater Chicago MegaZone*

**Publisher/Editor-in-Chief
Vladimir J. Len**

**Contributing Editor and
Club Liason
Karen S. Boomgarden**

**Contributing Editor/Anime News
D. B. Killings**

**Continuing Contributors
D'Andre Williams
Matthew Zell**

199X Volume One, Number 11 (November/December 1990) copyright 1990 Chicago MegaZone, unless otherwise noted. All rights reserved, and ownership of all material reverts to original authors and artists. The views expressed in this publication are those of its writers, and are not necessarily those of the Chicago MegaZone or of anime fandom in general. No attempt has been made to infringe upon copyrights already held by their respective authors, artists, or creators in Japan or elsewhere, nor is any intended.

Submissions, letters, comments, complaints, and letter bombs should be forwarded to:

Chicago MegaZone
PO Box 59167
Chicago IL 60659-0167
USA

Back issues: This issue - \$ 3.00; issues #7-10 - \$3.00 each; issues #3-6 - \$1.75 each (costs include postage). Cash or check accepted only - make checks payable to Chicago MegaZone. Please write to the above address for additional information regarding the Chicago Megazone or 199X.

Deadlines for the next issues of
199X are the following:

Issue 12 (January/February '91): January 12, 1991

Issue 13 (March/April '91): March 15, 1991

* * *

**The Greater
Chicago
MegaZone**

*Formerly C/FO Chicago
Re-established 1989*

Current Officers

Executive Officer
D. B. Killings

President
Newton Ewell

Vice President
D'Andre Williams

Secretary
Tina Cawi

Treasurer
Karen S. Boomgarden

Officer at Large
John Weber

Sergeant at Arms
Marco Mazzarella

The Editor Is Stupid

Vladimir Len

My apologies for a late 199X. A whole bunch of problems came to light at once, but I'm not going to continue about them. Hopefully it won't happen again.

Then again, I'll take that back: CapriCon is coming! And with CapriCon comes the famous (or as we like to think of - infamous) **1991 CapriCon Anime Guide!** Production is just beginning on this monstrosity of a work, but it looks like it's going to be a good one. As the artists have been working on it for the past two months (yes, lots of *original work*), we will be soon soliciting for synopsis of various shows/OVAs/movies. Anyone interested in doing work for the guide should talk to Newton Ewell or Doug Killings. A list of the program should be available at the next meeting, and we encourage the use of word processors (as this cuts down our typing time...).

In a not-so-packed issue (well, it could have been bigger...don't worry...*next time*...) you will find all the usual stuff, plus our ever growing features: Karen has been going crazy with her ar-

ticle *Nan Ni?*, and you'll see that it has quite grown from last issue. D'Andre Williams presents the first part of his fiction story *Have Attitude; Will Travel*, an ever-growing story set in the Five Star Stories universe. Also, D.B. begins a synopsis of Sunrise's adaptation of Heinleins *Starship Troopers*.

Did I promise Matt Zell's Guide to Orange Road last issue? Oops - please bear with me, but the first twenty or so episodes don't exist on disk, which means *lots* of typing, something I didn't have enough time for. Anybody got some free time, an IBM PC, and a good typing speed?...Next issue, I promise...

Thanks again to everyone who contributed to this issue - keep it coming! If you don't and would like to, let me know; we can always use more!

Writers:

Doug Killings, Karen Boomgarden, and D'Andre Williams.

Artists:

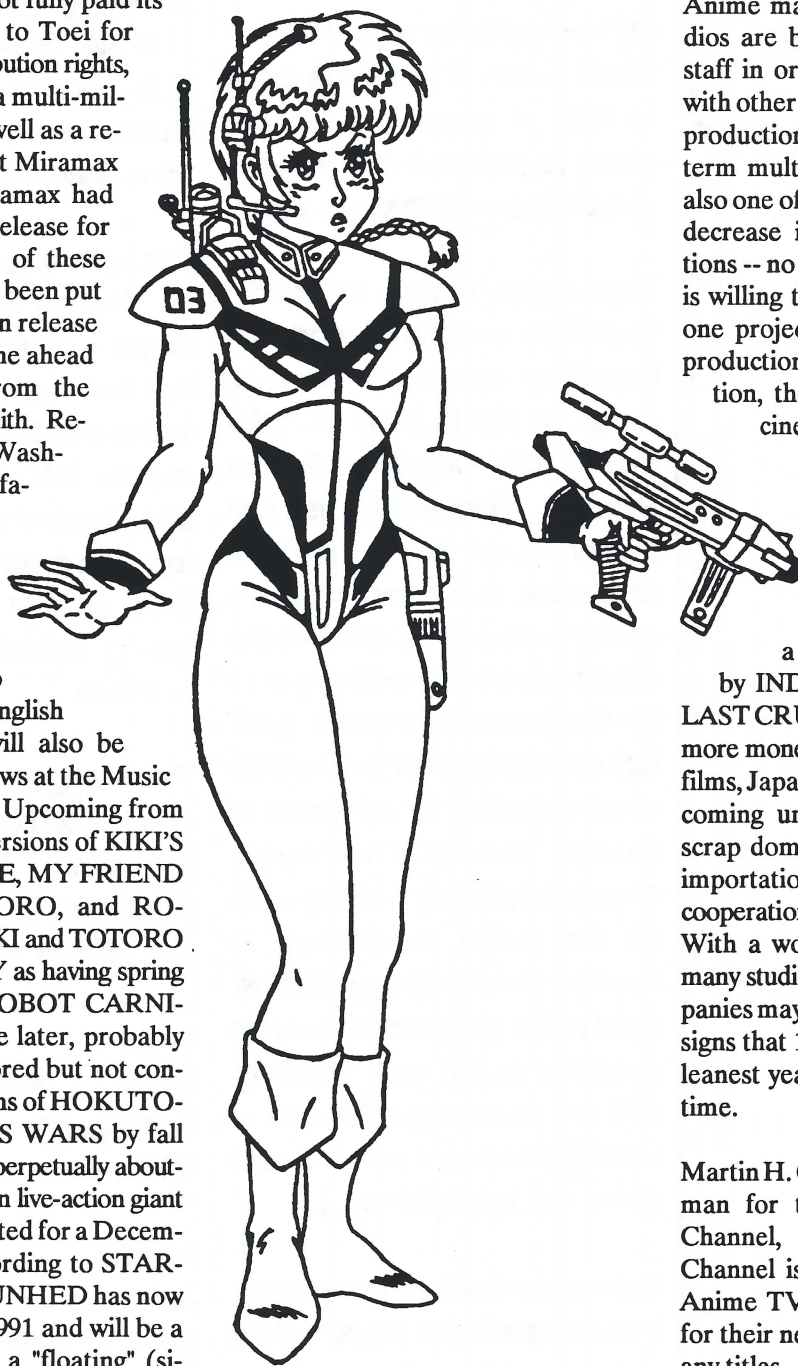
John Weber (for his beautiful cover), Keith Wright (for his awesome back cover), Paul Carter, and James Mikucki.

Enjoy!

Anime News D.B. Killings

The American release of Toei films' **GODZILLA VS. BIOLANTE** has hit a major snag. The American distributor, Miramax Films, has not fully paid its \$500,000 advance fee to Toei for North American distribution rights, and Toei has slapped a multi-million dollar lawsuit as well as a restraining order against Miramax for this reason. Miramax had planned a spring '91 release for the film, but because of these developments this has been put on hold. The American release of **LENSMAN** has gone ahead despite opposition from the estate of E.E. "Doc" Smith. Reviews in Seattle and Washington D.C. have been favorable. The Chicago release will be at the Music Box Theater from Dec. 7 to 20, with a number of Friday midnight showings to follow. FYI, the English version of **AKIRA** will also be shown as midnight shows at the Music Box on Nov. 23 & 30. Upcoming from Streamline: English versions of **KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE**, **MY FRIEND NEXT DOOR TOTORO**, and **ROBOT CARNIVAL**. **KIKI** and **TOTORO** are listed by **VARIETY** as having spring '91 releases, while **ROBOT CARNIVAL** will be sometime later, probably summer of '91. Rumored but not confirmed: English versions of **HOKUTO-NO KEN** and **VENUS WARS** by fall '91. **ROBOTJOX**, the perpetually about-to-be-released American live-action giant robot movie, is now slated for a December 1990 release, according to **STAR-LOG**. Yeah, right. **GUNHED** has now been slated for June 1991 and will be a nationwide instead of a "floating" (simultaneous openings as opposed to scattered theaters here-and-there) release. **SOLAR CRISES**, the Japanese/American live-action co-production, has been released in Japan but there are no firm

plans for an American release. The review from **VARIETY** is reprinted elsewhere this issue. An American release is considered almost certain, due in large part to the mostly western cast (Charlton Heston, Jack Palance, etc.).



Another Japanese/American live-action co-production that has been announced: **THE GUYVER**, starring (be-

lieve it or not!) Mark Hamill. This is a recent start-up, with no release date announced. A live-action **MYI-THE PSYCHIC GIRL** is also in production.

The proliferation of OVAs in Japan has apparently had a negative effect on the Anime market. Many animation studios are being forced to cut back on staff in order to be more competitive with other studios, resulting in shoddier productions and curtailing many long-term multi-video story plans. This is also one of the reasons there has been a decrease in animated movie productions -- no one can put up the money or is willing to become that tied down to one project long enough for a major production to be completed. In addition, the general state of Japanese cinema is not rosy: while **KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE** and **FIVE STAR STORIES** were the two top-grossing domestically-made films in Japan for 1989, their total gross was not a quarter the amount raked in by **INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE** or **BATMAN**. With more money being made from imported films, Japanese film companies are now coming under increasing pressure to scrap domestic production in favor of importation, or at least international cooperation (such as **SOLAR CRISES**). With a worldwide recession looming, many studios and a few production companies may go under. Already there are signs that 1991 may become one of the leanest years for new Anime in a long time.

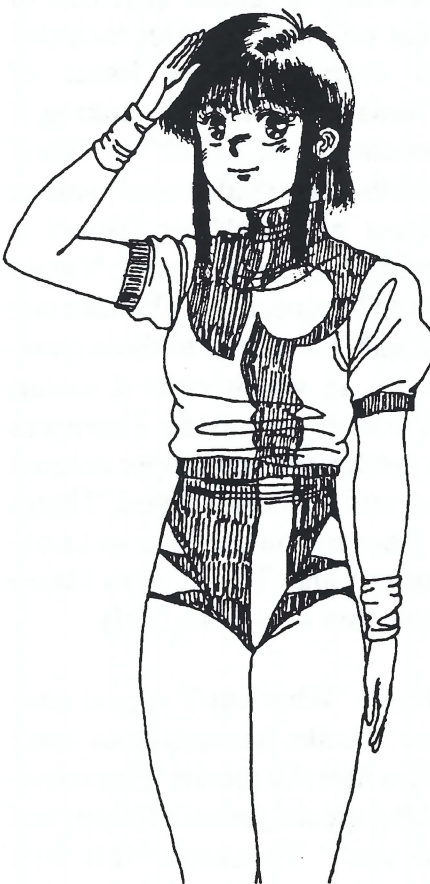
Martin H. Greenberg, the main spokesman for the upcoming cable Sci-Fi Channel, has confirmed that Sci-Fi Channel is looking at some Japanese Anime TV series, movies, and OVAs for their network but declined to name any titles. There are reports, however, that these include **DIRTY PAIR**, the **MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM** saga, the untranslated **YAMATO** movies, **ARMORED TROOPER VOTOMS**,

and a number of short, "one-shot" OVAs like M.D. GEIST and BLACK MAGIC M-66. Nothing has been confirmed, however, and neither is anything likely to be confirmed for some time. However, Mr. Greenberg expressed confidence that some Anime will be picked up to meet Sci-Fi's huge programing requirements. FYI, start-up for the channel is now slated for March or April of '91, although it will not be available nationally for some time. As of Windycon, Greenberg had received some very encouraging words from Chicago Access, indicating Chicago may be joining Denver as one of the first major cities to sign up for the new service. Keep your fingers crossed.

The long-rumored GUNDAM OVA series has finally been confirmed. GUNDAM 0083: STARDUST MEMORIES (Woody Allen in a mobile suit?) will be released in a manner similar to GUNDAM 0080: WAR IN THE POCKET, i.e. six one-half hour episodes released over six months. The first segment should already be released, meaning the final installment should come out at roughly the same time GUNDAM FORMULA '91 hits the theaters. Other new or soon-to-be-released OVAs include A.D. POLICE II, an original YAWARA! video, CITY HUNTER OVA vol. 2 & 3, KARULA, B.B. (BURNING BLOOD), S.D. GUNDAM IV: GUNDAM MORASS, EARTHIAN pt. I & II, SILENT MOEBIUS, VIOLENCE JACK: HELLSWIND, CLEOPATRA D.C. pt. III, SILENT FAIA, LODOSS WAR pt. 1 (first of another 26-part series), RIDING BEAN II, and CAPRICON (from the creator of OUTLANDERS). A RANMA 1/2 OVA is expected soon, possibly before the year is out. This is probably the rumored RANMA 1/2 movie mentioned last issue. Latest laser-disk TV-series releases: little kid series GRANDZORT and Miyazaki's FAMOUS DETECTIVE HOLMES. SURPRISE OVA OF THE YEAR AWARD goes to THE ENEMY ARE PIRATES, a six-part piece of lunacy that has to be seen to be

believed. This series came in almost unnoticed earlier this year, probably because the title is in Kanji and therefore hard to translate. One more piece of FYI: The cover jacket to the GAL FORCE EARTH SAGA, PT. II laser-disk contains an apology for the animation quality of EARTH SAGA, PT. II!

MOBILE POLICE PATLABOR TV series ended for now in September,



with episode #46. The series may come back early next year. RANMA 1/2, NADIA AND THE SECRET OF THE SEA, and DRAGONBALL Z all continue to do well. New series worth mentioning: KARASUTENGU KABUTO, an historical martial arts series, and MASASHI ROAD, an S.D. GUNDAM-inspired "giant robot" comedy series. The late Tezuka Osamu's final project, a biblical epic titled IN THE BEGINNING, will be finished by disciple animators working with NHK and

the Italian network CVE. The 26-part series is unique in that it will be produced entirely in English; even the Japanese release will have subtitles instead of dubbing. Japanese broadcast is scheduled for sometime in 1991; an American release has not been announced, but it is believed that the series will run on the Family Network cable station. Two additional LUPIN III tv movies are planned for 1991. The previous two, BYE-BYE LIBERTY and HEMINGWAY PAPERS, were broadcast within the last year and were hugely successful.

For those of you who have memberships to the 1991 Worldcon or are thinking about buying memberships, please note that the membership prices start going up drastically the closer you get to the con. Those who have memberships before 1/31/91 will be eligible to nominate for the 1990 Hugo Awards. One of the categories for the Hugo award is, of course, "Best Dramatic Presentation". For those who are wondering, AKIRA is NOT eligible for this category, being a 1988 Japanese release and a 1989 American release. Our recommendation: NADIA AND THE SECRET OF THE SEA.

Final piece of news: Fox's THE SIMPSONS is beating THE COSBY SHOW in the ratings!

-- D.B. Killings

News Courtesy the Following
Sources: Dan Kanemitsu, Christine Ferris, Vladimir Len, Martin H. Greenberg, VARIETY, ANIMAGE, and NEWTYPE.

Nan Ni??

Karen S. Boomgarden

The perceptive readers among you are already asking, "Why's the title on this column different?" Well, that's because I learned something else while in search of *The Definitive Teach Yourself Japanese Book*. In the intro material to a neat little text titled "Making Out in Japanese" (now you get some insight into MY thought processes...), by Todd and Erica Geers, he states that "desu ka" and "-masu ka" have "gone bye bye." So, why keep an outdated title around?

And, speaking of this book, GET IT. The reason is simple: modern Japanese-speaking people, and the Nihonjin heard in anime, don't speak text book Nihongo. They speak contemporary, colloquial Japanese, just as you and I don't speak textbook Eigo, but rather a more relaxed form of English, complete with slang and idioms. "Making Out in Japanese" and its sequel, "More Making Out in Japanese," are small paperbacks (105 to 125 pages) packed with what the covers term "lover's language and fighting words." They are very useful for those of us who want to know the down and dirty things, like how to say "I'm gonna kick your a--!" (which, in Japanese, is literally "I'm going to hit you until you die.") Okay, okay, I'll tell: "Bukkoroshite yaru!" (Women don't have an

equivalent, naturally--they're too polite (koff koff). The book only gives the male version.) The phrases within each book are listed from most polite to least, and are marked for either men or women.

After reading just the first few pages of this book, I knew the meaning of "genki" (the title of that odd little booklet included in every so many issues of "Newtype")--strictly speaking, it means "good health" or "good spirits", but it's also used to mean "How are you?" or "How's it going?" ("Genki?" and "Genki datta?" respectively.) It's also one possible response to those questions, in which case it means "I'm fine." (An aside: There was a syndicated newspaper column several years ago called "Things I Learned on the Way to Looking up Other Things." Now I know how that columnist felt!)

To say "What's up?" repeat after me: Nanka kawatta-koto atta? This literally means "Has something special/unusual happened to you?" To answer this with "Nothin'", as so many of us do, say "Betsu-ni" or "Nani-mo."

I could go on for days, but have your own fun. Go to Asahiya and get these books. They're usually in stock; head for the back left corner and look on the low shelf, about knee-high, where the books are laid flat. These two are usually toward the back, next to the wall shelf. For those

of you who can't get to Asahiya or another Japanese bookstore, the publishing company is Yenbooks, a division of Charles E. Tuttle and Co., and the ISBN is 0-8048-1541-0 for the first book and 0-8048-1592-5 for the sequel. The price is \$5.95, and the category is Language/Humor. Happy hunting!

Last issue, I mentioned a pair of workbooks on Kanji. Well, I have both volumes now, and am I ever glad I spent the money! "Read Japanese Today," the little paperback I touted, is okay for very basic information on characters you're likely to see as a tourist, but it's nothing compared to these. If you really want to LEARN kanji, get "Basic Kanji" Volumes I and II. Get lots and lots of pencils and a good (electric) sharpener. Then, sit yourself down and get to work. The authors employ visuals to help cement the shapes and meanings of the kanji characters. I especially like the one for "metal" or "gold," which looks like tunnels in a mountainside (which is, of course, where ore comes from) with little sparkly things near the bottom.

In my lessons in "Japanese for Busy People" I finally got to the unit on telling time. "Ji" is "hour," and minutes are numbers with "-pun" or "-bun" appended to them. "Han" is "half" as in :30, like this: Gozen kyu-ji han (9:30 AM). "Gozen" is AM and "gogo" is PM. "Kara" is "from when and

"made" is "until when", as in "Eiga wa nan-ji kara nan-ji made desu ka." (From when until when is the cinema open?) So what, you say? Well, a couple weeks ago I was watching some episodes of "What's Michael?" and one was called "Michael's Day." In this one, the narrator tells us what's happening at various times during the day, as the animation changes from color to black and white and freezes to simulate snapshots. For instance, "6:30 AM, Michael eats breakfast." (Please, that's an example... don't write me with the REAL dialogue!) I didn't catch all the things the narrator was saying, word for word, but I got most of the times, and the pictures spoke for themselves. This is one of those cases where it doesn't really MATTER that you don't get it word for word, if you're able to catch phrases here and there. (A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, as I said in my first column, but sometimes it comes in handy.)

FLASH!!! FLASH!!! STAR TREK: TNG anime in-joke!!! In the episode "Suddenly Human," how many of you caught the "Lensman" references? The Tellarians? (only one letter different, there...) The Van Buskirk/Kimball embrace, minus the forehead-rubbing? The Baby Britannia with Fins? Do we have Rick Sternbach to thank? Of course we do!!! (Thanks for indulging me. I'm done now.)

And now, a book review--of sorts. Remember in the first installment of this column, I talked about how easy it was to transliterate kana? See and say? Well, it's soapbox time again. Doug and Vlad have already given reviews of "Awakening" (the Ballantine/DelRey Gundam novel translation), but neither addresses the transliteration problems. Read on, folks, and be enlightened about the pitfalls of sloppy transliteration/translation. Frederik Schodt may have "Manga! Manga!" to his credit, but that doesn't hold much water with me now. There are more errors in this book than should have been allowed. I am beginning to suspect that DelRey Books' marketing department said, basically, "Well, only anime fans are going to buy this book, and we know they're so desperate for anything like this in English, we don't have to be careful about the quality. Just slap it together, we'll charge an outrageous price for it, they'll all buy it anyway, and we'll make a few bucks. The sales will justify doing it again, and again, and again..." That's crap. If any mainstream SF fan (what a concept!) picked this up, they'd be insulted at the level of non-writing present in these pages. We deserve better. But, enough ranting... on to the point. First, a couple of explanations. There are certain letters which are seen as interchangeable by the Japanese when romanizing their language. "B" and "V", and "L" and "R" are the

most frequently confused. (And the Japanese think it looks okay either way. It doesn't really matter what you or I think. To them, it's fine.) Thus, the transliteration of the Zabi family name as "Zavi" is more a judgment call than an error. "Z" and "J" are sometimes similarly confused, so "Zeon" is somewhat forgivable, although the Japanese translated materials nearly always use "Jion." (Also, "e" and "i" don't sound anything alike in Nihongo: "e" sounds like "eh" and "i" sounds like "ee," so "Zeon" would be "zeh-on", which is nothing like "jee-on" as the Japanese intended. So much for Schodt's claim to "give preference to the Japanese.")

Now to the really painful stuff. First and foremost is the name of the man we love to hate, Char Aznable. Schodt in his "wisdom" has chosen to call him Sha. This, after acknowledging in the preface to the novel that the English language material most often calls him Char. Of course, most of this material COMES from Japan in the FIRST place! This should tip Fred to the idea that the Japanese intend the name to BE Char. (Amuro's name appeared once on some toy or premium as "Amro." Why didn't Fred pick up on this, too???) Why he chose to fly in the face of Gundam tradition, as set up by the Japanese themselves, except to hack off the legions of Gundam fans is beyond me.

Then there's Char's given name, the kana for which is "Kasobaru," most often transliterated as Kassobal or Kassovar (remember the b/v and r/l problems). Our esteemed hack calls him "Caspar." That loses one syllable completely; remember also that every syllable is pronounced, even when some sounds are elided. It also puts a "p" where there's a "b" in the kana. Sorry, Fred, but "p" and "b" are discrete sounds, and there is no confusion in the Japanese about which is which. This is just plain wrong.

The Zabi children fare just as badly. Giren becomes Gren. (The only vowel that is almost ALWAYS elided is "u." Anything else is pronounced. "I" is normally only elided when following "sh" or "k"; in order to get "Gren," the kana would have to read "gu-re-n." Wrong again, Fred.) Kishiria loses syllables and has other misplaced, until we get "Krishia." And poor Dozol (do-zo-ru, in the kana)--now his name is "Dozzle." AARGH!!!! How hard is it to read the kana, write down the syllables, and pronounce them? These errors reflect poorly on Fred Schodt as a transliterator. And I haven't gotten to the glaring translation error yet!

Here it comes: "Kido Senshi Mobile Suit Gundam." Fred

would have us believe that "Kido Senshi" means "mobile suit." Nope. It means "Orbit Warrior" or "Moving Warrior." "Mobile Suit" does not translate; they use katakana, and say "mo-bi-ru sutu."

I've heard the opinion expressed that Schodt was merely the first one on the scene when Ballantine/DelRey was looking for a translator, not necessarily the best. Errors like those I've enumerated here seem to bear that out. It would behoove DelRey and other publishers looking to bring this kind of literature into the States to find someone capable and with an eye for precision in transliteration/translation, AND with skills in honing rough writing. Tomino is NOT the best writer, and not assigning an editor this book (I can't believe there was one... I just can't) did the anime and sf communities a great disservice. Printing something word for word is NOT what's involved in printing a translation. It also calls for smoothing rough spots, reworking dialogue to "sound right" to the ear of the other language speaker, removing sections that are obtrusive to other areas (like appendices), and so on. None of that was done here. Not a bit. Anime fans who bought this novel paid more than top dollar for shoddy work, and they were

ripped off. (I paid \$4.95 for "Carrion Comfort", an 885-page Bram Stoker award-winning novel. Which one's worth the money? I know. Do you?)

An editor should have done things like moved the historical background into appendices, so that a conversation that begins "So, you're Amuro Ray?" isn't immediately interrupted by a six-page digression on the history of the Jion movement. That's the worst example I can think of. Me? Opinionated? You bet. I for one won't be buying any more of the translations of the Gundam novels. DelRey has proven to me, by their poor treatment of the first one, that they think I as an anime fan am too dumb to know when I'm being taken for a ride. And I plan to let them know it, too. DelRey would never put out a science fiction novel with this lack of quality. Anime translations deserve the same treatment and quality control as the "mainstream sf." Let them know if you agree with me.

Time to go back into my cell now. The men with the white coats and needles are waiting for me. I promise I'll be better next time. Honest. Just don't show me any more Gundam novels.

Ki-o-tsukete-ne.

Chicago MegaZone Bulletin Board

The Library Closes in January

As of January 1, 1991, the Greater Chicago MegaZone tape library is closing for inventory and reorganization. This is expected to take two months. No tapes will be accepted after Jan. 1, and be advised that if you turn in tapes in December, there is a very real chance they won't be done before the closing.

This is done as a service to the membership. With 108 members already, and more every week, it is necessary to shut down for a time so we can put together the library listing. This will include tape format, copy

quality, and info on subtitled/dubbed anime. Many of our new members don't know what to ask for, don't know what we have, and consequently don't get anything. Once the list is ready, copies will be sent in all new membership packets, and will also be mailed to current members.

Also in that list will be the names of those people who will be taping for the club, along with the tapes they have in their libraries. Doug Killings will no longer be the sole clearing house for taping. This is mainly to help keep taping timely, so that you who ask for tapes

don't wait three to five months to get them back. When the list comes out, you'll know who has what, so you'll know who to ask. This may mean you'll be giving tapes to more than one person. The limit is still three per member at a time, though.

We ask your indulgence while we take apart the library and rebuild it. The reorganization will benefit everyone in the MegaZone, and will be well worth the inconvenience.

Thanks in advance.



ANIME SILKS

By JOHN WEBER
(312) 743-4057

Your message, classified ad,
anime-related
service or
information here.
Free to members!
See the editor for
more information.

Convention Information

January 25-27, 1991 — CONFUSION '91. Days Hotel, Southfield MI; rms \$60.00. Guest of Honor: Esther Friesner. Artist GoH: Robin Wood. Fan GoH: S.P. Somtow. Toastmaster: Wendy Council. Memb: \$22.00 to 1/1/91 and at door. Info: Confusion, c/o AASFA, Box 8284, Ann Arbor MI, 48107.

February 1-3, 1991 — CZARCON 8. St. Louis MO. Adults-only relax-a-con. Info: Czarcon 8, c/o 1156 Remley Ct., University City MO, 63130.

February 21-24, 1991 — CAPRICON 11. Hyatt Regency Lincolnwood, Lincolnwood IL. GoH: Ellen Kushner. Ed.GoH: Beth Meacham. FanGoH: Becky Thompson. Special GoHs: Robert Weinberg, Terri Windling. Memb: \$30.00 to 1/31/91, \$40.00 at the door. Info: Capricon XI, 1935 W. Pratt #1, Chicago IL, 60626. NOTE: This is the convention we run our annual 60+ hour Anime video extravaganza, complete with projection TV and Anime Film Guide. Come on over to the biggest Anime show this side of the Mississippi!

March 1-3, 1991 — WISCON 15. Holiday Inn Southeast, Madison WI. GoHs: Pat Murphy, Pamela Sargent. Memb: \$16.00 to 2/1/91, \$24.00 at door. Info: Wiscon, Box 1624, Madison WI, 53701. NOTE: Feminist SF/F convention.

March 15-17, 1991 — GRANDCON '91. Harley Hotel, Grand Rapids MI. AGoH: Scott Rosema. Filk GoH: Tom Smith. Memb: \$15.00 to 12/31/90, then \$20.00. Info: Grandcon '91, Box 88244, Kentwood MI, 49518.

April 26-28, 1991 — DEMICON '91. Howard Johnson's, Des Moines IA. GoH: Joe Haldeman. AGoH: Lucy Synk. FGoH: Gay Haldeman. Memb: \$15.00 to 3/15/91, \$20.00 at door; \$12.00/day. Dealer table: \$15.00 (+ memb), limit 3. Info: Demicon, Box 7572, Des Moines IA, 50322.

May 3-5, 1991 — CHIMERA 2. Hyatt Regency Woodfield, Schaumburg IL. GoHs: John Crowley, David Hartwell, Gene Wolfe. Small sercon (serious convention; no filk, films, etc.) Memb: \$35.00 to 2/1/91, then \$40.00. Info: Chimera 2, c/o Meida, 730 Fair Oaks, Oak Park IL, 60302.

May 3-5, 1991 — CONTRAPTION. Hilton, Troy MI. GoH: Frederik Pohl. FGoHs: Bob Hills & Liz Gross. Info: Contraption, Box 2285, Ann Arbor MI, 48106.

July 4-7, 1991 — SAN DIEGO COMICON 22. San Diego Convention Center & Pan Pacific Hotel. Memb: \$30.00 to 3/14/91, \$36.00 to 5/24/91, \$45.00 at door. Dealers room sold out. Info: San Diego Comicon, Box 128458, San Diego CA, 92112. NOTE: Major Anime presence at this convention.

July 12-14, 1991 — ARCHON 15. St. Louis MO. GoHs: Will Shatterly, Emma Bull. AGoHs: Mr. & Mrs. Steve Scherer. FGoHs: Jim & Kim Elmore. TM: Brian Thomsen. Info: Archon 15, Box 50125, Clayton MO, 63105.

August 2-4, 1991 — HORRORFEST 3. Bismarck Hotel, Chicago IL. GoHs: Joe R. Lansdale, Paul Dale Anderson. Editor GoHs: Gretta Anderson, Crispin Burnham. FGoH: Richard Crowe. Info: Horrorfest 3, Dept. L - Box 277652, Chicago IL, 60627.

August 29-September 2, 1991 — CHICON 5/WORLDCON '91. Hyatt Regency, Chicago IL. GoH: Hal Clement. AGoH: Richard Powers. Ed.GoH: Martin H. Greenberg. FGoHs: Jon & Joni Stopa. TM: Marta Randall. Memb: \$95.00 to 12/31/90, \$110.00 to 3/31/91, \$125.00 to 6/15/91, \$150.00 at door; supporting \$30.00 (available only to 7/15/91). Memb. checks (made out to Chicon V): Chicon V, ATTN: Larry Smith (Registrar), Box 218121, Upper Arlington OH, 43221. Dealers Room: Sold Out. Info: Chicon V, Box 218121, Upper Arlington OH, 43221. NOTE: This will be midwest fandom's SF event of the decade. App. 8,000-10,000 people are expected to be in attendance from all over the world. We will be running the official Worldcon Anime show as well! Get your memberships NOW before they go way up.

Most Convention information courtesy LOCUS magazine.

Chicago MegaZone Club News

The Turn of the Wheel...

The Greater Chicago MegaZone has been around in this incarnation since January 1, 1990. In that time, 108 people have joined our group. Represented in our membership are 18 states and Canada. We, the officers, would like to thank all of you who have given your time, money, and interest. This was a great first year, and we hope to keep going into the next century!

And now, so you can't say you'll never see your name in print, here are the names of all 108 members (as of 10/90). They're more or less alphabetical, so you should be able to find yourself here with relative ease. Thanks, everyone!!!

Deric Bernier	Frank Gembeck	Marc Mitchell	Scott Shay
David Benson	Richard Gomes	Robert McNay	Bob Scully
James Brown	Ryan Gavigan	Sean Mells	Jeff Stevens
Edward Benson, Sr.	Bill Harrison	Aaron McLin	Eric Schneider
Eric Brislane	Bud Harmon	John Morawski	Licia Searce
Ralph Broom	Michael Harris	Thomas Miller	William Sanchez, Jr.
Karen Boomgarden	Rose Hille	Jordan Nogee	Raymond St. Paul
Tina Cawi	Steven D. Harris	Kevin O'Connell	Don Tieberg
Harold V. Campbell	Vincent Jones	Jenny O'Donnell	Joe Titus
Homer Coble	Alex Jones	Wai Ow	Norman Tsang
Mike Cox	Jim Jilly, Jr.	Jeff Oelkers	Ollie Talbott, Jr.
Bill Dunbar	Michael Jimkoski	Michael Palmaira	Lang Van Tran
Gary Cane	Doug Killings	John Pfeifer	Michael B. Termena
Paul Chroniak	Dave Ketcham	Justin Pasioka	(What's Michael? Our
Maurice Coney	Dave Kovarik	Rob Pacyna	100th member!)
Enrique Conty	Chris Krolczyk	Joshua Paulson	Bryant Velez
Thy Chan	Chris King	Roger Phillips	Michael Washington
Gene Chin	John Kelly	Dindo Perez	John Weber
Sean Danyluk	Arin Komins	Dennis Richards	Gary Weir
Kay Engstrom	Vladimir Len	Thomas Riberdy	Eric Winkowski
Stefvon Egeston	Matthew Levy	Gordon Reilly	Artie West
David Fleming	James LaRue	Carolyn	D'Andre Williams
David Ewell	Tony Lentini	Hanson-Roberts	Travis Williams
Newton Ewell	Gene Lauro	Tom Reed	Jerome Williams
Tracy Lee Evans	Calvin Lincoln	Russ Rezek	Gary Yurgil
John Fritz	Marco Mazzarella	Russell Rezaian	Matt Zell
Anthony Garcia, Jr.	Al Manuel	James Ross	
Wendel Gray	Mark Martin	Franz Rivera	
Reginald Gates	James Mickucki	Frank Sewald	

Chicago MegaZone Club News

We Who Are About to Expire Salute You!

In this and all subsequent issues of 199X, we will be printing the lists of memberships about to expire. These will be in two month chunks, printed two months in advance. Dig if you will the picture: This is the November/December issue. So, the expirations listed are for January/February. In the January issue, we'll print March/April. This is to give those of you who want to renew (all of you, right? Of course, right!) ample time to write out that check and mail it to the MegaZone PO Box (Box 59167, Chicago, IL 60659-0167, ATTN: Karen Boomgarden) before your membership lapses.

And now, without further ado, here are those members whose renewal time approaches.

January 1991: Doug Killings, Frank Sewald, Jenny O'Donnell, John Weber, Kay Engstrom, Newton Ewell, Karen Boomgarden, James Mikucki, Bill Dunbar, Chris Krolczyk, Tina Cawi, Bill Harrison, Bud Harmon, Eric Brislane, Bob Scully, Matt Zell, Jeff Stevens

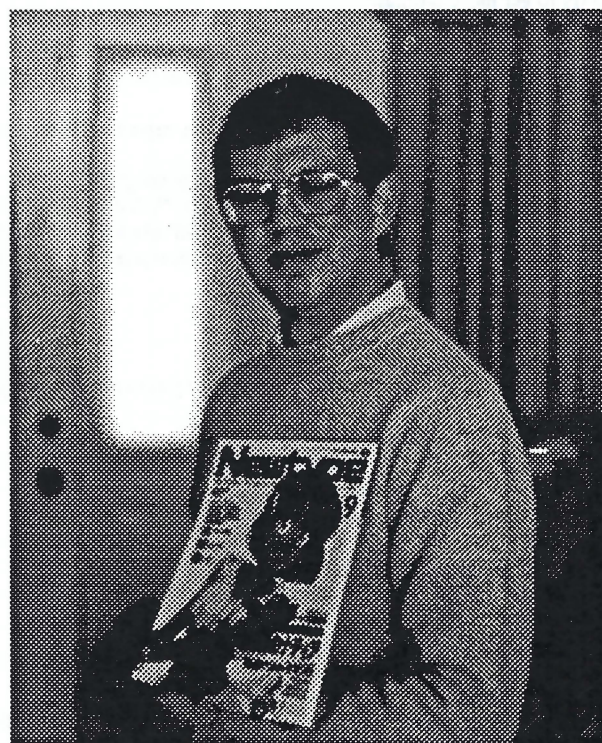
February 1991: Carolyn Hanson Roberts

You can renew any time up to the end of the month in which your membership expires. If your time runs out in January, you can re-up in November if that's when the finances look good. Your anniversary date will still be January. Thanks, and we'll see your checks in the mail!

The Chicago MegaZone's 100th Member!!!

Michael B. Termena recently became the Chicago MegaZone's 100th member as our membership grew to 109 members as of early-November. We thought it would be nice to show him off to all of you (so that's what he looks like!) In fact, the club semi-officially became an international club with a new member from Belgium joining us recently.

The Chicago MegaZone thanks all of you for your support, and hope we can grow and prosper further!



Have Attitude; Will Travel: The Chronicles of the First Wester Mirage Corps

BOOK 1 - PART 1

THE GATHERING OF THE WINDS (ONE OF AMATERASU'S NOT SO GREAT IDEAS)

Written by D'Andre Williams

Things were temporarily quiet in the Joker System. All the fighting and disputes had been put aside for the time being. Only one thing could cause this: the presentation of a new fatima. And this was a very special occasion because eight fatimas were being presented.

On the planet Delta Belune, the hallways of Float Temple echoed with the footsteps of a lone Mirage Knight. He stopped before two enormous doors and knocked.

The doors swung open before him. "Enter," came a voice from inside. Robes flowing, he walked in and bowed before the two figures.

"Since when have you been so formal, Newton?" asked the male of the pair.

"Just keeping up appearances."

Amaterasu smiled, and asked him and Aisha to sit.

"You've heard about the trouble brewing around Wester?" she asked.

Newton nodded. "They've amassed quite a little fleet."

"They have comparable ground forces."

"I didn't know there were that many fatimas around."

"There aren't," said Amaterasu. "Most of them use etrimls."

Newton's contempt was obvious. "What's the problem then?"

"They do have some fatimas, and some very good headliners, too," replied Aisha. "The two together make them potentially dangerous."

"Tomorrow is the impression ceremony," she continued. "They intend to try to get more fatimas."

"What do you want me to do?"

Aisha handed a folder to Newton. "These are the profiles of seven headliners who will be there hoping to get lucky and impress one of the new fatimas."

Newton scanned over the prospects in the report. "You got to be kidding."

"Each of them is good enough to be a mirage knight."

Our standards have slipped, then, he thought. "What do you want me to do with these psychopaths? Killing them would take a lot of time."

"We don't want you to kill them," Amaterasu replied, "we want you to recruit them."

"Recruit them? For what?"

"The 1st Wester Mirage Knights."

"Never heard of them."

"That's because they don't exist yet. We want you to recruit these people and form up the group."

The implications of this suddenly hit Newton.

"You're putting me in charge of them?"

"That's right. You're getting command of your own group."

"Of psychos."

"Would you prefer a group of 'do-it-by-the-book' cadets?"

Newton said nothing. Aisha smiled kindly at him.

"Who knows, you may even like them."

"What if they don't impress one of the fatimas?"

Amaterasu grinned. "Don't worry about that."

Newton knew what that meant. "How is that possible?"

"Images of them were implanted in their memories during the Ezlazer

process."

"Did it affect them?"

"The mind control didn't take completely and their personalities will vary greatly."

"Don't worry, that's what they did to Karen," added Aisha.

"That explains it," replied Newton. His fatima, Karen, had a mind of her own, and more often

than not, put him in his place. "But they still might not want to join."

Amaterasu thought for a moment. "Offer them a custom made Led Mirage designed by Ladios Sopp."

Newton's jaw dropped. "You really want these people, don't you?"

"The eight of you will provide a very effective deterrent. After this, you can deal with the Rainbow Boowrey."

Newton's eyes lit up at the prospect of mangling those idiots.

"Well, what's your answer?"

"You know me, I'll try almost anything once."

Sometime later on the planet Addler, nobles and headliners from across the Joker System were gathering. From his viewpoint of several miles up, Newton surveyed the arrivals.

"This oughtta be fun," came Karen's voice.

"It always is," he replied as he piloted his mirage down through Addler's upper atmosphere.

"Why are we coming down ahead of everybody else?"

"So we can scout around and check out our prospects."

"So far only two of them have arrived. The rest are..."

She was cut off as the plow-wave of a ship plunging down through the atmosphere hit them. Newton had been listening to Karen's report and hadn't seen it coming up behind him.

After a few shaky moments, he regained control - only a few thousand kilometers closer to the surface than they had been seconds before.

"Who were those jerks?" Karen's voice was still a little shaken.

"The ones we're recruiting against."

"Good."

The cruiser that had just blown past Newton carried the command core of the Wester Headliners Imperial Naval Expansion. Their ultimate goal was to take control of the Joker System away from Amaterasu. Towards which, they had, under their leader's direction, constructed a huge fleet to sweep across the system. Today however, they were out to get some more fatimas for themselves - since they had yet to acquire a meight.

"The pilot reports that we almost ran down a mortarhead entering atmosphere," reported Eric, one the four aides to the Imperial leader.

Julia swung her chair towards him and scowled.

"That idiot! He could have scratched the paint. What does he have to say for himself?"

"Damn, I missed."

"How long till we land?"

"Five minutes till we're in 'parking' position," reported Matt(2), snapping to attention.

"Landing prep?"

"Shuttles ready to go," came back Frank(3) also coming to attention. "Sirens?" They used that type of mortarhead rather than the Led Mirages.

"Prepped and ready," answered Doug(4). He was already standing at attention, so he saluted briskly instead.

Julia smiled and kicked back in her chair. Amaterasu would be hard put to outdo the entrance she was going to make.

Inside the city, two people walked through the airfield checking out the newest arrivals. They stopped at one of the hangars and looked over the mortarheads sitting there.

"Some people have no taste," commented Kay, the female of the pair.

"Or shame," replied John.

The two of them had arrived the day before and were out and around looking over the competition for the fatimas. Their own mortarheads were parked on the other side of the city.

"Do you think we'll get lucky and impress one of them this time?" she asked wistfully. This was, after all, their second time trying.

Before John could respond, the sound of landing jets firing blanketed the area. They went outside, and beheld the most frightening Mirage they had ever seen. The construct was about 25 meters high. The lower half had four legs, and the heads of a dog, a goat, and a dragon. A pair of wings spread out from its back, and just above where they joined to the body rose the full upper torso of a Led Mirage. As it landed, each of the heads roared to announce the Mirage's presence to everyone within a five mile radius.

"That, I like," Kay approved, nodding her head.

With unusual grace, the thing bent over and lowered its headliner and fatima to the ground.

John and Kay walked up to them.

"Very nice."

"Thanks," replied Newton. "Gotta a miester drunk, took some incriminating pictures, and had him make it up for me."

"What was his name?" asked Kay.

"What did you give him?" asked John, taking out a note pad.

"I'll tell you all about it later, after we get settled. How about in an hour in the main hall?"

"We'll see you there." They turned and walked off.

"That's two of them," said Newton.

"They seemed fairly normal," said Karen.

"Most people do until you try to kill them."

"You been reading 'SHOGUN' again?"

"I'm just making a point."

"Make it as you walk, let's go," she said, pushing him toward the door. "I wonder where the other five are?"

The Mirage walked into its berth on its own and shut the door.

"Out there somewhere. Anytime you get tired you can stop."

Out in the desert terrain of Addler, a mortarhead skimmed along, barely above the rocky surface. The improvised flight system that it wore had been unreliable recently, and rather risk plummeting to the ground it flew ten meters above it. The headliner inside was bathed in red and yellow warning lights, proclaiming that the mortarhead was in severe need of repair. Sometimes the headliner thought that the only thing keeping it airborne was his constant encouragement. His long range sensors were out (again), so he didn't notice the other mortarhead flying above.

That one had been watching the lower Mirage for some time now and wondered what was keeping it going. Every few minutes smoke would pour out, it would falter and almost crash, but somehow pull out at the last minute. He would have felt sorry for the headliner, if it wasn't for the fact that the unknown was heading in the same direction that he was. That meant he was also trying to get one of the new fatimas, and the less competition the better. The upper headliner began a slow, arcing dive that would bring him closer, so that he could determine if the other mortarhead really was that bad off, or just faking it.

However, a third mortarhead had come on the scene by now. It skimmed above the ground using the hoverjets in its legs. Thinking that the other pair had been fighting, and given the relative condition and size of the two (the upper was about twice the size of the lower) he decided to even things

up, and charged in.

The descending mortarhead had its attention focused on the one below, and did not see the other coming in. The lower one did see the new one coming (as a sensor flared into brief life), and noting the drawn sword, pulled up, just as the other leapt to deal with the diving one directly overhead. Proximity alarms blared in all three at once.

All three were now intimately aware of each other, along with the fact that they were going to crash together. At that instant, a cruiser moving at high speed tore through the area, scattering them asunder.

"We just hit three mortarheads," reported Eric.

"Damage?" Julia paced restlessly across the control room and back.

"Bay door 1 is jammed," reported Frank.

Her fist slammed down, making everyone jump. "Well, fix it!"

"We can't in time to land."

"Without that we can't make our big entrance!" She flounced to her chair, threw herself into it and sulked.

"Why do we work for her?" asked Eric quietly.

Matt answered, "It's a living."

"There's got to be better way to earn a few credits," shot back Frank.

"The Rainbow Boowrey is recruiting," said Doug.

As Julia's whines increased in volume they all began to give it serious consideration.

In the desert, everything was still. Suddenly two mounds of sand heaved, to reveal two mortarheads who struggled upright, then took up defensive stances, sabers glowing in the desert light.

"What's your problem?"

"I saw you attacking that other mortarhead. And it only half your size. Thought I should even up the odds."

"We weren't fighting! I was only going to take a closer look at him."

"From behind?"

"Best way."

"Where is he anyway?"

"Don't know. From the shape he was in, he probably exploded."

"You heading in to the impression ceremony?"

"Yeah." He didn't want to have to try this one in a fight. From the look of him it would be an even match. Overwhelming advantage was always preferred.

"So am I." The saber was sheathed. He relaxed a little and slid his own away, with a suitable flourish.

"What's your name?"

"Wilard. You can call me Bill."

"Aaron."

"Shall we?"

"Let's."

Keeping an eye on each other (and not letting the other get behind), they continued on their way.

Behind them another sandmound moved, and revealed the third mortarhead. It staggered to its feet, and promptly fell over in a shower of sparks. The headliner crawled out and surveyed his craft. He didn't even bother to try and fix it this time. It had given up the ghost. Permanently. Pulling his bag and walking stick out of the wreckage, he put on sunglasses, and watched the other two Mirages recede into the distance. With a fatalistic shrug he shouldered his bag and started walking.

Further ahead of all this, another headliner watched a different mortarhead act strangely. This one was in no danger of crashing, as it was moving across the desert floor. It was, however, gyrating wildly, and flinging its arms around. This was due to the fact that the headliner on board was doing air guitar to the song he was listening to. The other person couldn't hear the music, though, and thinking that the mortarhead was out of control, ran up and tackled him to the ground.

"Are you alright?" she asked as both mechs staggered to their feet.

"I was until a minute ago," he responded. "Why did you do that?"

"I thought you were out of control."

"I was jammin' along to the music."

"What music?"

"This music." He patched the stereo into the radio.

After a few minutes, her mortarhead began echoing the same movements his had been making. He stopped the music.

"That's good," she said. "Can I listen to some more?"

"Are you going to the impression ceremony?"

"Yes."

"So am I. No problem. I'm Bill."

"I'm Tina."

Introductions made, the two proceeded to air guitar across the desert until the shock of a passing cruiser blew them over.

"Who were they?" asked Tina as she stood up and stared after the departed airship.

"Just some people who have to die."

Sometime later still, as Easter began sinking toward the horizon, four people sat in the main hall. They had been talking for hours now, discussing everything from Mirages to politics. They finally fell silent as the doors opened and a large group came in.

"Who are they?" asked Kay, nodding at the unfamiliar uniforms.

"They're from Wester," Karen answered. "They almost knocked us out of the sky coming in."

"That's nice."

"The woman in front is their leader," explained Newton. He hadn't forgotten that little incident and at the first opportunity was going to remind her about it. Repeatedly. "The four behind her are her aides, along with the two dozen guards, standard issue."

"If you can't have quality, go for quantity," said John.

Newton smiled. Aisha was right. He did like them. Or at least these two of them.

The group from Wester walked across the room, where the woman and her four aides sat down at a table. The guards grouped around and tried to look impressive.

Two more people came in after them.

"Quite a group," commented Tina, looking around at the gathered crowd.

"Yes, the great, not-so-great, and the wanna-bes all gather when they give away fatimas." Bill gestured around. "Do you see an empty table anywhere?"

The two of them wove their way to a table, not far from Newton's. Two more people entered the room, and immediately moved against a wall.

Aaron and Bill surveyed the room, still keeping a wary eye on the other, though more out of habit now, than need.

"Not a bad looking group," said Bill. "All things considered."

"Don't look like they could put up too much of a fight," Aaron came back.

Normally he would have criticized someone for that kind of remark, but Bill was thinking the exactly the same thing. Despite their less-than-friendly beginning, he and Aaron had discovered that they tended to think alike, and had hit it off from there.

After checking the crowd once more, they made their way to an empty table set back against one wall, near the others.

Karen nudged Newton. He smiled. All was going according to plan. The prospects were gathered together, sitting in tables that had been "conveniently" left empty nearby so that he could get a look at them as they came in.

His train of thought was interrupted as the doors opened again, this time to admit Amaterasu and his Mirage Knights. Everyone in the room stood and bowed as they walked through. Amaterasu looked over toward Newton and saw the soon-to-be knights around him, except for one.

Newton caught the look in Amaterasu's eye and glanced over at the sole remaining empty table, and wondered where the last of "his" group was.

Out in the twilight of the desert, a lone figure continued to hike toward the city. With any luck, I'll make it there just time, he thought - just before he tumbled, head first, down a steep sand dune. Lying in a heap at the bottom, he decided that this would be a good place to sleep, and passed out while swearing to dissect the people in that cruiser.

Back in the hall, the conversations continued.

"Do you always just think about yourself?" asked Bill.

"Someone has to," replied Aaron.

"I always think about the other person."

"Why?"

"He may be plotting something."

This brought forth laughter from the surrounding tables.

"That ranks up there with 'Do onto others, then run like hell'," called John.

"Or 'Evil always wins because good is so stupid'," added Tina.

"The only way to go," said Aaron.

The ice broken, and having found some kindred spirits, they pulled their tables together. Introductions were made all around, and each in turn presented their spud.

"Y'all here to get one of the ladies?" asked Newton.

"Yeah," answered Tina. "But, since you've already got one, why are you here?"

"Actually, I was looking for all of you."

Karen swore she saw ice crystals hanging in the air around them suddenly.

Judging by the looks he was getting, Newton decided that he'd better talk fast. He stood up and threw off his cloak to reveal the Mirage Knight insignia underneath.

The glares from the group didn't change.

"I'm a Mirage Knight, and I want to recruit you."

"For what?"

"The First Wester Mirage Knights."

"Never heard of them."

"Let's not go through that again."

"Go through what?"

"I'll explain later. Well?"

"Why should we join?" asked John.

"You get to deal with them," Newton said pointing at the group from Wester.

Resentment flared in the four that had "encountered" them earlier.

"That's a plus, admittedly."

"Why us?"

"You're good, and you're psychos."

"What's in it for us?" asked Aaron, still not convinced.

Newton smiled. His next words would have them right where he wanted them.

"How about a custom-made Led Mirage designed by Ladios Sopp?"

The collective jaw dropping registered 5.7 on the Richter scale.

"That's right," came a voice off to one side.

They turned and saw the person they had just been talking about standing there, blonde braid trailing over one shoulder.

"It's true?" asked Kay.

"Yes, it is."

"Anything we want?" asked William.

"Anything."

"What's the catch?" asked Wilard.

"No catch," said Newton. "You just have to pledge to serve the A.K.D." He looked around the table. "Well, what's your answer?"

"We don't even have fatimas yet," said Tina.

"I have confidence in you."

"I'll do it," said Kay.

"Me too," said John.

"Why not," said William.

"Count me in," said Tina.

"I've got nothing to do for the next few years," said Wilard.

"This will be truly scary," said Aaron. "Let's do it."

"How many people are there in this Wester Mirage group?" asked William.

"All of us here, plus one more, if he ever shows up," answered Newton.

"Eight against the world."

"Only way to go," said John.

Newton raised his glass. "A toast. To the First Wester Mirage Knights."

"Long may we crush the opposition."

As they drank, Newton looked over the group from Wester, who were just leaving to go to their rooms. For a moment, he felt sorry for them. But only for a moment.

Meanwhile, in another room in the hall, eight ladies were getting ready for their date with destiny. These were the fatimas that everyone was talking about and hoping to be lucky enough to impress. Their moods varied as much as their personalities did. Most of them were talking or busy, making preparations for tomorrow. One however sat staring out the window. She didn't want to be impressed. She didn't want to end up being treated as a toy, just to operate some psychopath's giant killing machine. She just wanted...

"What's wrong, Ariel?"

Ariel looked up. Two of the others had come over and were now standing next to her.

"It's nothing, Jenny."

"Come on, out with it," ordered the other.

"Really, Lynn, it's nothing."

They stared at her.

"Not buying it?"

They shook their heads.

"I don't want to be a fatima."

She couldn't have caused a greater shock if she'd plugged the floor into a reactor. Everyone stopped what they were doing and gathered around.

"I mean, I don't want to be a fatima to somebody who treats us like we were toys."

The group as a whole relaxed.

"For a minute," said Lyra, "I thought you were going to say that you were a pacifist."

"WHO ARE YOU CALLING A PACIFIST?"

"Calm down," said Begonia. "It's not like being called a pacifist is an insult."

"That's what you think," said Sasha.

"Does it matter?" asked Victoria.

"What are you going to do, Ariel?" asked Monica, Victoria's twin.

Ariel looked up at them. They were the children of a very gifted, but very erratic meight who was harder to pin down than digging a hole in water. Yet, somehow, Amaterasu had managed to tie him down long enough to make the eight of them. The meight had been persuaded to alter the "natural selection" process of fatimas choosing their own masters by implanting images of the desired person their minds, but he didn't like doing it. Much. So he had, in his own way, rebelled. Seven of them had the implants, but the eighth was free to do what she wanted. After Amaterasu had found out, and calmed down, he'd agreed to the "wisdom" of that. It would look less suspicious to have one "free" fatima, than to have all eight go to the same group.

"I'm going to escape."

"When?"

"During the ceremony. When it's my turn I'm going to run straight out the door and keep going."

"Running away? What do you hope to accomplish?" asked Lyra.

"Find who I want to be my master. Will you help me?"

They all nodded.

"Thanks. When I go, do what you can to interfere."

They agreed, and she hugged them all for the last time.

The day of the ceremony arrived with much fanfare. All the nobles and headliners, dressed in their finest garb, gathered in the hall to await the start of the ceremony. Amaterasu and his entourage were already in place when the group from Wester entered and took positions near the front. Shortly after this, another, smaller group entered.

"Spread yourselves out, and keep alert," said Newton.

"You expecting trouble?" asked John.

"You never can tell."

They separated and mingled in with crowd.

"You are expecting trouble, aren't you?" asked Karen.

"It'll look very suspicious if most of the fatimas went to the same group, let alone all. Some people might take offence and declare that the whole thing was rigged."

"But it is."

"There's no need for them to know that."

Before this discussion could continue, the trumpets sounded. Everyone

turned their attention toward the stairs leading down from the dais. Eight fatimas stood in a row across the back. The host for the gala stepped forward.

"Ladies and gentlemen, welcome one and all to this festive occasion."

A loud snore came from the crowd. Karen poked Newton to make him stop.

Judging the mood from the crowd's approval of that editorial comment, the host hurriedly got straight to the point.

"Each of the fatimas will come up here, look for her master then go to them. Let's get started."

Down the stairs came the first one. Lyra was on the tall side, with short red hair and blue eyes. She looked around the room, then walked across the hall. A wave of optimistic faces rose in front of her, and was followed by a matching wave of depressed ones as she passed by. She stopped in front of one person. His face lit up. She smiled, and turned around and bowed to the person behind her.

William didn't know what to make of this.

"Me?"

"You."

"I can deal with it."

She took his arm and stood next to him. She shrugged her shoulders and rolled her eyes at the guy across from them who looked on the verge of crying.

Sasha was the next one down. She was of about average height with blonde hair and grey eyes. She didn't stop at the bottom, but kept going. She had already seen her master. As she passed the group from Wester, she stuck her tongue out at them. A roar of shock arose. Fatimas weren't suppose to do things like that! Sasha stopped in front of John.

"You're the one."

"Really?"

"What are you, goofy?"

John didn't know how to react at first, then he smiled and said, "Yes."

She returned the smile and took his arm.

"There's something wrong with these fatimas," commented Frank.

"Why do you say that?" Eric asked.

"Look at how they act. Fatimas are suppose to be quiet, polite people."

"Ssh!" Doug poked him in the ribs. "The next one is coming out."

"They're supposed to be shy, submissive little creatures who..."

"ARE WE NOW?" came loud female voice in his ear.

He spun around and came face to face with Jenny.

"I was going to pick you, but now I've got half a mind to go pick somebody else!"

Frank dropped to his knees and began to do some major groveling, much to the amusement of everyone else in the hall. After several minutes, Jenny relented and agreed to stay with him.

Matt handed him a napkin.

"What's this for?"

"You've got some brown stuff on your nose."

Frank glared at him.

Victoria and Monica came down together. The crowd was surprised. Twin fatimas had never been seen before. They were both tall, with long brown hair and green eyes. Victoria spotted her master first. She kissed her sister goodbye and walked off. Monica saw hers in the other direction and walked over. She reached hers first.

"Don't cry," said Kay, holding her. She watched the other fatima moving through the crowd and smiled when she saw where Victoria had ended up. "I think you'll be seeing your sister again very soon."

Tina had just finished telling Victoria the same thing.

"You two will be back together in no time."

"How do you know that?"

"Trust me."

Begonia came down the stairs. She was kind of on the short side - short height, short black hair, and a short skirt. The only thing in any way large about her was her gorgeous brown eyes. She stood on the dais and looked around for several minutes, seemingly oblivious to the hopeful stares. Deliberately she stepped down, heading for the group from Wester. She walked straight through them without a glance and stopped in front of someone standing in the back. She bowed.

"Master."

Aaron let loose an evil laugh.

"I LIKE IT!"

Julia looked nervously at the dais. "That's six of them. There are only two left and four of us."

"Somebody isn't going to get one," said Matt.

"It had better not be me," said Julia. "It doesn't look right for me not to have a fatima!"

Lynn came down and stopped. It took only seconds for her to spot him, standing over by a pillar. She walked right up to Wilard and bowed.

There was something about the way she smiled that made him nervous, but he liked it. He took her hand and turned back to watch the last fatima.

Ariel stopped at the bottom of the stairs. She had long black hair and grey eyes. She stood there, looking, for a long time.

"What's wrong with her?" Karen looked over at Newton.

"I think she belongs to our missing man," he answered.

The host walked up to Ariel.

"What's the matter? Don't you see him?"

"I see him alright. In fact she's right there." She pointed at Julia.

Julia's face lit up. She shouldered her way forward and started to walk up the stairs.

Karen had to help to keep Newton's jaw from hitting the ground.

"Then why don't you go to her?" asked the host.

"I'm waiting for the right time."

"The right time for what?"

"This." Ariel broke into a dead run and blew past Julia, heading for the doors.

"STOP HER!" screamed Julia.

Jenny faked fainting and tripped up Frank and the others as they tried to stop the fleeing fatima.

Weaving in and out of the crowd, and thanks to her sisters' help, Ariel was free and clear in a dead run to the doors, which opened just as she got there.

A loud scream echoed through hall.

"That didn't sound like just one scream," said William.

"It wasn't," said Lyra.

Chaos reigned in the hall. Several people were trying to get through the doors at once.

"QUIET!"

Everybody stopped. Amaterasu had spoken.

"You, you two there, and you three go see what happened. Newton, take charge of it. The rest of you, remain calm."

The F.W.M.C. (First Wester Mirage Corps) went out in obedience to Amaterasu's pointing finger.

On the ground was a tangled pile of hair and limbs. Aaron reached out and lifted Ariel up, revealing under her the person she had just run into at 30 m.p.h. and accelerating.

"Think he's still alive?" asked Aaron, setting the still-unconscious fatima back on the ground.

"He doesn't look too badly damaged," said Kay.

"His rib cage is probably jello," commented John.

Wilard moved forward for a closer look. "The broken bones probably chewed his organs into spam."

"Probably got bone fragments in the brain as well," added Tina.

"You people are so-o-o compassionate." Karen rolled her eyes.

"This guy's a veg," concluded William.

"I hope not." Newton bent to check for a pulse.

"Why is that?"

"This is F.W.M.C. No. 8."

The figure on the ground moaned, rolled over, spat out some blood, and sat up with a loud groan.

"Where am I?"

"Addler."

"What hit me?"

"She did." Wilard pointed at Ariel.

"Couldn't have been her. Must have been a low flying cruiser."

"She's a fatima."

"Ah."

Ariel opened her eyes.

"What happened?"

Lyra laughed. "You ran into somebody while trying to escape."

"Is he all right?"

"See for yourself."

Ariel walked over to person on the ground and knelt down next to him.

"Are you alright?"

He looked up at her as she looked down at him.

Everybody there felt the impression take place.

Karen looked over at the other six fatimas. They were laughing.

"What's so funny?"

"She kept going on about how she didn't want to be impressed and now it just happened," said Sasha, holding her sides.

"What's your name?" asked the person on the ground.

"Ariel."

"Ariel, will you be my fatima?"

"Yes."

"Ariel..."

"Yes?"

"Will you help me up off the ground?"

The two of them got up. He leaned on his walking stick.

Newton came forward. "We should go back in."

"Wait a minute," said Aaron. "You said that the other - person - was your master."

"I lied."

"What's your name?" asked Kay.

The figure brushed some of the sand off of himself and presented his spud. "My name is D'Andre. You can call me Deon."

"How would you like a job?" asked Newton.

"Doing what?"

"Being a member of the F.W.M.C."

"You're joking, right? You're not joking. Why me?"

"Because you're good and you're a psycho," they chorused.

"Plus you get a custom-made Led Mirage designed by Ladios Sopp."

Deon thought of his old one, now rusting peacefully out in the desert. He turned to Ariel.

"What do you think?"

"That you're stupid if you don't say yes."

The doors to hall swung open and the F.W.M.C. entered. Julia walked up to Deon.

"Thank you for bringing her back." She held out her hand to lead Ariel away.

"She's not your fatima," said Newton. Raising his voice he spoke to the entire hall.

"Folks, we have witnessed the true impression of this one to her chosen master."

"Prove it," demanded Julia.

Newton pulled off his cloak and revealed the insignia underneath.

"You're a Mirage Knight! Damn! But there have to be three people of headliner status present."

"What do you call us?" shot back Aaron as he and the others presented their spuds.

Julia stood there seething. She wasn't going to get a fatima. The whole trip was for nothing. All the expense, all the bother, not to mention the waste of a whole new outfit! Disgusted, she walked back to her group.

The captain of her guard came up to her and bowed.

"What do we do now, my lady?"

"How should I know?"

"Can we kill them?"

She waved a careless hand. "Knock yourself out."

The guards charged forward.

The Knights formed a line.

"Get spud," ordered Newton.

They held them up. "Ready."

"Heat 'em up."

They switched on.

"Funky."

"Aim 'em high."

They took up their attack stances.

"Now let's show these people that the First Wester Mirage Corps don't

play around."

"I'm going to be sick, thought Julia. First Wester. Hah!

"Attack!" The Knights charged headlong into the attacking guards.

Julia listened to the combat behind her as she walked toward her group of aides. Even the thought of those jerks who'd stolen HER fatimas being shredded didn't cheer her up.

The noise stopped.

That was quick, she thought. Those guards are getting better. Hope they don't expect a raise. They're overpaid as it is.

But something was wrong with the expressions on her aides' faces. They stared behind her in - horror? Something landed in front of her with a dull thud. She looked down at it and jumped a meter into the air. It was the head of the captain of the guard. She turned around and saw her twenty-four guards lying in at least seventy-two pieces. She looked back at the Knights who were smiling at her. John had the head of one the guards balanced on his foot. He booted it toward her like he had the first one. She jumped back to avoid getting covered in blood.

"Who are those people?" asked Deon.

"They're from Wester," said Wilard. "They blew most of us over with their cruiser when they arrived."

"A cruiser?"

"Yes."

"A big black and silver cruiser?"

"Yes, why do you..." He stopped as realized he was talking to air. Deon was charging across the hall, screaming at the top of lungs.

Wilard turned back to the others. "I think he's mad about something."

Julia tried to back away from this charging madman, but she tripped over the head on the floor and fell backwards. Deon leapt up and brought his spud down. Julia screamed as the Knights and the Wester group charged forward.

Julia sat sprawled on the floor with the blade of the spud between her legs.

"I would like to have a word with you," said the wielder.

"A...a...about w..w..what?"

"About what? ABOUT WHAT? You caused me to crash out in the desert. I've been walking for hours, over hundreds of miles just to get here. And when I get here, and get run over by my now-fatima, then you tell these goons to kill us. This has not been a good day," he concluded, foaming at the mouth.

"W..what do you want from me?"

"Apologize."

"What?"

This was not at all what she was expecting.

"You're going to apologize in front of all these people for being an utter pain in the butt, and pay for my lost mortarhead."

"Why should I?"

"If you don't, this blade will ruin your sexlife."

"You wouldn't."

He moved the blade forward several inches. "Try me."

"No." She'd never let anyone tell her what to do before, and she certainly wasn't going to let this psycho start a trend.

"Wrong answer." The blade moved forward again.

"ALRIGHT, I'M SORRY! I'LL PAY FOR YOUR MORTARHEAD! O.K. ALREADY?"

Deon switched off the spud. "Now was that so hard?"

"He's as crazy as the rest of them," Karen commented to no one in particular.

Newton looked over his recruits. This was going to be fun.

Julia stalked back over to her aides.

"Why didn't you help me?"

"He would have killed you," Eric protested.

"Not to mention us," muttered Matt.

"Besides, the other seven didn't look like they'd let us interfere," argued Doug.

"They would have turned us into spam like the guards," added Frank.

"What a wimp," said Jenny.

Looking at the hole in her dress, not to mention the spattered blood, Julia led them out to their ship for the trip home.

Sometime later after the ceremony had ended, the now ordained Knights sat with their fatimas talking with Ladios Sopp.

"O.K.," started Aaron. "It's time to pay up."

"You mean the Mirages," Ladios Sopp asked innocently, toying with the end of his braid. He batted his eyelashes at John and smiled at Kay's and Sasha's expressions.

"What else?"

"Do you have anything in particular in mind?"

"Do we ever!" said John.

"Just a minute," interrupted Sasha. "Don't we get some say in this?"

"What do you mean?" asked William.

"If we're going to operate these things, we want some say in what they look like," said Lyra.

"I ain't gettin' in it if it don't look cool," added Ariel.

This, the Knights weren't ready for. The seven fatimas sat there refusing to even go near their masters until they were given some say in the design of the Mirages. The Knights finally relented and went off with their fatimas to work on the designs.

Newton looked at Ladios Sopp. "Are they always going to be like that?"

"Who? Your troops, or their fatimas?"

"Both."

"I'm afraid so."

"Those poor wretches don't stand a chance," laughed Newton.

"They never do," answered Karen.

Several hours later, they came back and gave the miester their designs. Ladios' jaw dropped further and further as he looked through them.

"Are you people deranged or what?"

"You said anything," answered Kay.

Ladios was beginning to have second thoughts. These Mirages were not only strange looking, but were frighteningly powerful. The smallest of them could eat the Knight of Gold for lunch. Some of them were designed to channel their energy together into... his head began to hurt. He gave them to Newton to look through. Maybe he could talk some sense into his people. Mirages didn't need that much firepower.

Newton's reaction was just the opposite of what he expected.

He was laughing.

"You're as crazy as they are."

"Thanks. These are just what we need. If we're going to take on a whole planet, we're going to need everything we can get."

Ladios stood there with his mouth hanging open, hoping that sanity would strike these people between the eyes and kill them.

No such luck, he thought.

He resigned himself to his fate and agreed to make them, then promised himself a long vacation. Away from Wester, or anywhere near there.

* * *

Book 1 - Part 2
in the next issue of 199X!

Starship Troopers

Part One: Episodes #1 & 2 (Vol. I)

D.B. Killings

Episode #1: "Johnny"

The series opens with a short dedication to the late Robert A. Heinlein, then switches to a battlefield. Here we get a taste of the MOBILE INFANTRY (or M.I. for short) kicking ass.

During the Big Game at the end of his high school senior year, JOHNNY RICO (or "Juan Rico") tries to impress cheerleader CARMENCITA IBANEZ by scoring the game-winning touchdown. You can guess what happens. Later that day, the seniors are having a party to celebrate their impending graduation. Carmencita is honored for being the top student in the class, and lovesick Johnny can only watch. Johnny's friend, CARL, tries to get him to ask her for a dance, but shy Johnny won't have anything of it. As he finally gets enough courage to even say something, someone yells "road trip!". "Johnny, are you coming?" Carmencita asks. Carl thinks the whole situation is funny.

While driving with the rest of the gang, Carl asks Johnny what he intends to do now that they've graduated, and Johnny confesses he doesn't know. His parents want him to continue in the family business, but that's not what he really wants to do. Carl tells him he wants computer training, and has decided to enlist to get it. Later at the beach, Johnny gets to talk with Carmencita. "Have you really been accepted for pilot training?" he asks. "That's right!" This sets Johnny's mind going. All his friends were entering the military. Why not him?

Not too long after, Johnny signs the dotted line.

That night, when he tells his parents, they are both

shocked. Johnny's mother, especially, is not pleased. A pacifist, she cannot understand why her son would want to "learn to kill". She was also counting heavily on him to follow in the family business immediately after graduation, which of course is now impossible. Johnny and his father talk. His father tells him that, although disappointed, he cannot tell his son how to lead his life. "You do what you feel you want to do, not what is expected."

Johnny mopes home, not sure if he's made the right decision. Carl shows up with a computer disk he's obtained from a "source" -- which proves to be a recording of the battlescene from the beginning. Any qualms he may have are erased.

On the day before he is to report, Johnny says goodbye to his mother. The departure is not the bittersweet memory he had hoped for.

Next day, Johnny arrives at boot camp.

Episode #2: Hendrick

In space, a luxury liner approaches Earth, unaware of the cargo in its hold.

On Earth, Johnny is going through basic under the guidance of SERGEANT ZIM. Two of Johnny's friends, GREG and HENDRICK, decide to take on Zim during a self-defense class. No contest. Hendrick really gets hurt, and Zim coldly orders him back into line. Later in the barracks, Hendrick is really angered that Zim was as hard on him, and vows that one day Zim will get his. The others disagree -- he's only trying to teach survival skills, not carry out some personal vendetta.

On a training field, one of the boots goes "over the top" -- right into the line of fire. Zim dresses him down. "Heroics like that will only get you killed!"

Hendricks argues with Zim about the value of

learning to throw knives, especially in this age of technology. Zim responds that learning how to throw a knife is not the point. Learning how to fight with almost nothing IS the point. "We're trying to teach you to be deadly. As long as you are alive with one leg or one arm left, you can still be dangerous to the enemy!"

Hendrick still does not get it. On a march, Hendrick faints from heat exhaustion, and wonders if its worth it all.

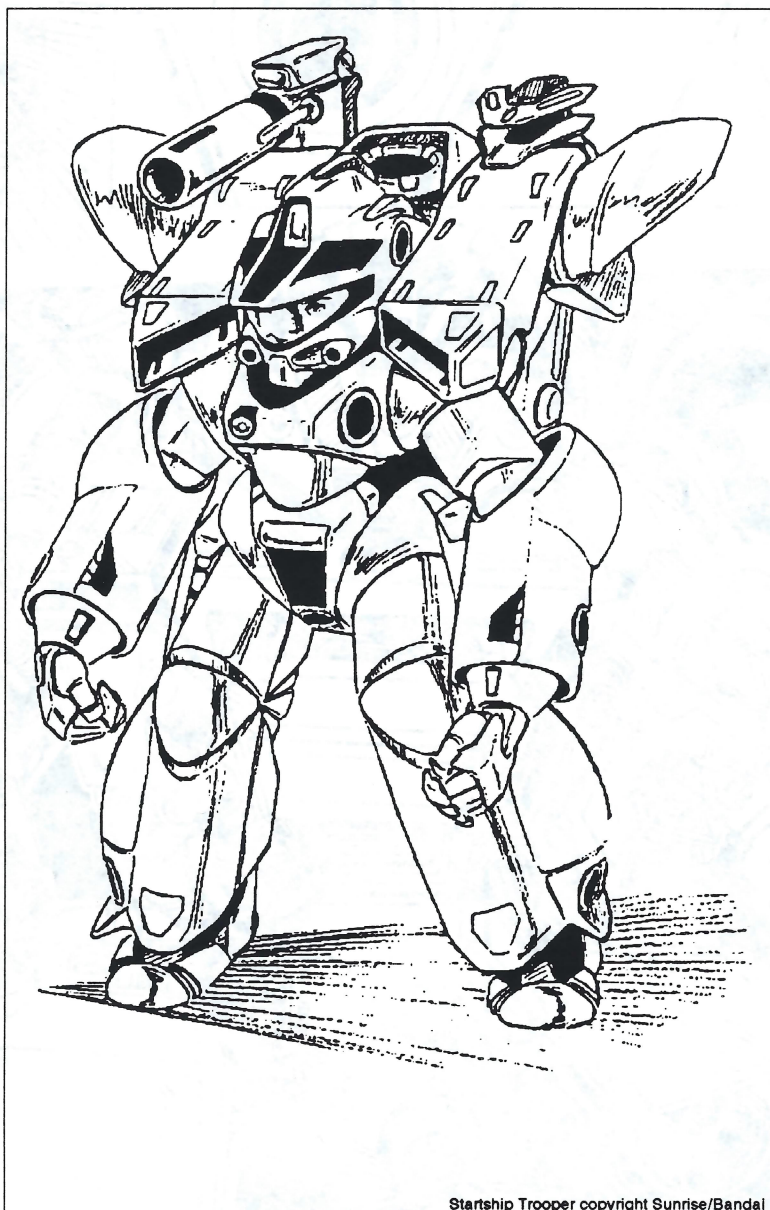
The day finally arrives when Johnny and the platoon have their first shake-down in a Mobile Infantry powered armor suit. You can tell none of these guys have ever been in a battle suit before. Afterwards, Hendrick tells Johnny that he thinks Zim "has it in for me!"

Hendrick gets a little too headstrong one day and is severely reprimanded in front of the others. He gets so mad he strikes Zim, who totally ignores the insult.

Meanwhile, at Buenos Aires Spaceport, Johnny's mother has come to pick up a friend.

Johnny and the platoon suit up for another training mission -- this time a simulated rescue in the middle of a fire.

Johnny's mother and her friend watch the landing of another spaceship, wondering why all the crash crews have been dispatched. A passing airport employee tells them traffic control lost contact with the pilot on descent, and the ship was now being landed by computer. They watch as it lands -- and bug-like aliens attack!



Starship Trooper copyright Sunrise/Bandal

With Zim monitoring, the platoon enters the conflagration. Hendrick blindly uses up his flame retardant in one burst and retreats, but Zim orders him back in regardless.

Johnny finds a civilian in the fire lying unconscious and rescues him, disobeying Zim's withdraw order. Even considering the circumstances, Zim does not take too kindly to being disobeyed.

Meanwhile in Buenos Aires, the alien attack on the spaceport continues relentlessly...

Hendrick calls it quits and resigns from the military, saying he can't understand why everyone is willing to stick it out.

Johnny, however, stays.

NEXT ISSUE: Episodes #2 & 3

